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Allocriticism and Autocriticism in the Views of Xenophanes of Colophon

Skepticism in its zetetic dimension is an expression of broadly-understood criticism taken as an anti-dogmatic position. However, in passages of Xenophanes' works both skeptical and negative dogmatic elements can be found.¹ It seems that the Colophonian does not adequately differentiate between these two positions; rather, he adheres to a view which may be called skeptical negative dogmatism, in accordance with which one continually searches for truth while simultaneously upholding that truth cannot be found. Despite this, he is rightly considered a critical thinker in the broadest sense of the word. Since he does not precisely distinguish between skepticism and negative dogmatism, however, his criticism as anti-dogmatism refers solely to positive dogmatism.² Thus, Xenophanes criticizes all claims

¹ Skepticism – from the perspective of Sextus' typology (*Pyr.*, I, 1-4) - assumes investigation, a constant search for truth, with the simultaneous awareness that it has not yet been cognized; thus, the skeptic is forced to refrain from final, decisive judgments and cannot dogmatically determine whether the truth will be reached, or not. Thus, when Xenophanes writes in fragment D-K B 34 that is no one and will never be anyone who will possess knowledge of the gods and of the things, of which he speaks, this statement must be classified not as skepticism, but as negative dogmatism. On the other, however, in other passages (especially D-K B 18) Xenophanes presents a skeptical view that does not lead into negative dogmatism. To clarify these positions, we can say that negative dogmatism declares that truth cannot be found, whereas skepticism is a negation of dogmatism in general, including both positive and negative dogmatism. A skeptic declares that he can neither state that truth can be found, nor that it cannot be found. For more on this subject, see: Woleński 1992: 18-19. Here, I would like to stipulate that I am only referring to Sextus' typology as a certain general model for distinguishing three basic philosophical standpoints (positive dogmatism, negative dogmatism, skepticism) to help recognize them in the context of the views of Xenophanes. At the same time, I am aware that I am using a historically-later typology to analyze Xenophanes' thought - a typology burdened with many long, philosophical discussions. Except where noted contrary, the Greek text of the fragments is taken from *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*. Griechisch und Deutsch von H. Diels, herausgeg. von W. Kranz, Bd. 1 – 3, Zürich 1985. Hereafter cited as D-K.

² It is worth noting that Xenophanes is autocritical, but not completely autocritical, because there are a few things of which he is quite certain. Such testimonies can be found in the texts of ancient authors. Galen (*Hist. phil.* 7, D-K 21A35) writes: "Xenophanes was in doubt about everything, being certain only that everything was one, and this was a god who was limited, rational, changeless." Graham's (2010: 127) translation. Sextus Empiricus, in turn, in *Pyr.* (I, 224, cf Diog. IX, 18) describes Xenophanes of Colophon as *hupatuphos*, which means that he was a skeptic who did not entirely free himself of dogmatic assertions. Among these assertions are the passages regarding the deity, which constitute an

to positive and final truth, seemingly not noticing that his own fragment B 34 (excluding the last sentence) also expresses a definitive and final thesis, according to which objective knowledge is unattainable (at least such that is ἀμφὶ θεῶν τε καὶ ἄσσα λέγω [scil. Xenophanes] περὶ πάντων), just like the hypothetical metaobjective knowledge that one has spoken the truth is unattainable. In this context, another question appears as to whether he considered the negative dogmatism he professed to be universal, or whether it allowed for exceptions. In other words, the question arises if the statement that no man possesses clear and distinct knowledge refers to all human beings, including Xenophanes, or whether he considered himself an exception to this rule. Is it the case that no one possesses knowledge, and neither does Xenophanes, or rather that no one possesses knowledge, but he himself constitutes an epistemic exception? In the context of the entirety of fragment B 34, this problem boils down to a dichotomy: either Xenophanes, like others, does not possess and cannot possess knowledge, thus making him one of those, who make do only with belief and opinion (δόκοι), or Xenophanes does possess knowledge in contrast to the rest of mankind, which can only hold opinions. This issue can be understood as the wise man - masses relationship, though it seems that this is a problem concerning reflection on criticism as such, namely, the problem of allocriticism and autocriticism.

Generally speaking, critique is a cognitive action that accompanies scientific, practical (for example, ethical), and creative cognition. Both actions and their products may be the objects of critique. In the case analyzed here, we are taking into account scientific cognition,

expression of a positive theology, as well as the monistic theses (everything is one) ascribed to this thinker. For many commentators, Xenophanes' skepticism is in conflict with his positive theology and ontology. Sextus Empiricus treats Xenophanes as *hupatuphos* that is, as someone who is partly free from *tuphos*, and so has not yet freed himself completely of the arrogance of (positive) dogmatic statements. Thus, we can accept the interpretation that Xenophanes is not completely autocritical (because he is quite certain of a few things), on the basis of the opinions of Galen and Sextus. In my opinion, another interpretation is also permissible, which alleviates Xenophanes' alleged positive dogmatism. Xenophanes' supposed monism may result from attempts at systematizing the philosophic tradition by later commentators (especially by Plato and Aristotle). On the other hand, Xenophanes' alleged new positive theology can be treated as a way of expressing opposition to traditional conceptions of the gods; in this interpretation, the aim of Xenophanes' comments about God would be to emphasize the epistemological presuppositions of all conceptions concerning notions of the gods. In the light of these assumptions, we can say that Xenophanes' certainty is not absolute and final. We cannot, therefore, exclude the possibility that Xenophanes is aware of the fact that all human convictions are only opinions (B 34, 4), including his own. This issue, as well as the problem of negative dogmatism's universality and scope, is the subject of analysis in this article.

and at the objective level, the possibility of possessing knowledge. Autocriticism takes as its object the cognitive actions and cognitive products (statements) of the author, which allocriticism concerns these actions and products in relation to everyone but the author of the critique. On the basis of extant fragments of Xenophanes' texts, we must consider whether he was an allocritical or autocritical thinker in regards to the question of the possession of certain knowledge. In other words, did he think that no one except he himself could possess knowledge (epistemological allocriticism in its modal version), or did he presume that he also could not attain knowledge (epistemological autocriticism in the modal version)? The sum of both of these positions would be the conviction that no one could ever attain such knowledge.

The thesis that Xenophanes was an allocritical thinker is not controversial (his criticism was aimed at other thinkers); the question disputed is whether or not he was also autocritical. If we take the object of critique to be the possibility of possessing knowledge, then the effect of allocritique would be the assertion that no one, excluding the critiquing subject, can either now, or in the future, possess certain knowledge; the effect of autocriticism, on the other hand, would be the assertion that the critiquing subject cannot possess such knowledge. Full criticism, as the enjoinder of allocriticism and autocriticism, would in this case boil down to the assertion that no one can possess such knowledge. Such criticism in reference to the possibility of knowledge would be co-extensive with the position of negative dogmatism (such a position may be called general negative dogmatism, GND).³ Two things must be added here:

- (1) We are only speaking here of the possibility of clear and certain knowledge (τὸ σαφές - B 34, 1), not of doxal knowledge laying claim to final certainty, for example (B 34, 4; B 18; B 35);
- (2) Criticism is understood here as an evaluation of the possibility of accepting and justifying a given statement.

³ It should be noted here that GND, in contrast to skepticism, is vulnerable to the accusations of self-refutation and inconsistency.

In reference to Xenophanes' philosophy, we must then ask whether he professed GND, or whether he remained on an allocritical position excluding autocriticism. Did Xenophanes, in proclaiming that there neither was, nor will be anyone who would possess the clear and distinct truth, include himself in the range in which this thesis is binding, or did he exclude himself? It is worth noting here that this problem refers to a more narrow understanding of criticism than the broadest sense of the term, signifying the ability to divide and distinguish.⁴ It seems that the issue of including or excluding oneself from the general mass of the opining is based on elementary distinction of oneself from others. Of course, we can accept that in professing GND one need not be conscious of this division, but the passages of Xenophanes containing the critique of various other viewpoints (eg. anthropomorphism, potential zoomorphism, metempsychosis) seem to undermine this thought. Thus, we must consider which thesis the testimonies concerning Xenophanes make more probable: that he was both autocritical and allocritical, or that he was only allocritical.⁵

The above statements and typology of criticism require clarification in light of fragment D-K B 34.

καὶ τὸ μὲν οὖν σαφὲς οὐτις ἀνὴρ ἴδεν οὐδέ τις ἔσται
εἰδὼς ἀμφὶ θεῶν τε καὶ ἄσσα λέγω περὶ πάντων·
εἰ γὰρ καὶ τὰ μάλιστα τύχοι τετελεσμένον εἰπών,
αὐτὸς ὅμως οὐκ οἶδε· δόκος δ' ἐπὶ πᾶσι τέτυκται·

Firstly, the word τὸ σαφὲς (B 34, 1) means certain and clear truth, which no one has perceived or will know. Secondly, this truth (knowledge) is further described in B 34, 2, which states ἀμφὶ θεῶν τε καὶ ἄσσα λέγω [scil. Xenophanes] περὶ πάντων. Thirdly,

⁴ Criticism refers back to the terms: *krino* (to separate, distinguish, judge, evaluate, explain, investigate, among others) and *kritikos* (critical, able to distinguish, deciding, among others).

⁵ Theoretically, it is also possible to hold that aside from the position that upholds the knowing - opining distinction and the one that assumes that everyone is condemned to opinion, a third position exists asserting that everyone in some sense knows. Such an option would be difficult to uphold, though it is true that the relativist views of the sophists, which Plato so passionately fought in the *Sophist*, revealing the possibility and form of falsehood, leaned in that direction.

Xenophanes asserts that no one has perceived this truth in the past, and that there will likewise be no one in the future, who will possess knowledge about it. Thus, the allocritical position in regards to this issue states that Xenophanes asserted that there would no one but he himself either in the past or future who would possess σαφές (certain and clear truth) ἀμφὶ θεῶν τε καὶ ἄσσα λέγω [scil. Xenophanes] περὶ πάντων; on the other hand, the autocritical position holds that Xenophanes asserts that he himself did not and will not possess σαφές (certain and clear truth) ἀμφὶ θεῶν τε καὶ ἄσσα λέγω [scil. Xenophanes] περὶ πάντων. Full criticism, as the combination of autocriticism and allocriticism, in regards to this issue holds that Xenophanes asserts that there was not, nor will there be anyone, who would possess σαφές (certain and clear truth) ἀμφὶ θεῶν τε καὶ ἄσσα λέγω [scil. Xenophanes] περὶ πάντων.

In Sextus' comments on fragment B 34, we can find it mentioned that Xenophanes understood mankind as γένος, using as a designation for this the name ἀνήρ.⁶ This would signify that he counts himself among those, who did not have and will not have the indicated objective knowledge. In light of Sextus' interpretation, Xenophanes professed full criticism, i.e. both allo- and autocriticism. The same interpretation is held by Varro and Arius Didymus, who oppose human opinion and divine knowledge. The former writes: “ὥς ἄρα θεὸς μὲν οἶδε τὴν ἀλήθειαν, ἴσος δ' ἐπὶ πᾶσι τέτυκται,”⁷ while the latter notes: “Quid putem, non quid contendam ponam, hominis enim est, haec opinari, Dei scire.”⁸ Many contemporary scholars, though differing in their detailed interpretations of the writings of the thinker from Colophon, also hold this view proclaiming that Xenophanes counted himself among those condemned to opinion, or at least that he did not consider himself epistemically singled-out. H. Fränkel treats Xenophanes not as a skeptic (more precisely: as a negative dogmatic), but as an empiricist. In fragment B 34 he states that knowledge about a supraempirical reality is uncertain, contrary to empirical knowledge.⁹ Guthrie comments in a

⁶ „[...] ἄνδρα δὲ τὸν ἀνθρώπον, τῷ εἰδικῷ καταχρώμενος ἀντὶ τοῦ γένους· εἶδος γὰρ ἀνθρώπου καθέστηκεν ὁ ἀνὴρ.” Sext. Emp., *Adv. Math.*, VII, 50.

⁷ Arius Didymus ap. Stob. *Ecl.* II, 1, 17 (D-K 21 A 24).

⁸ Varro ap. Augustinus, *De civ. dei*, VII, 17.

⁹ Fränkel 1925.

similar spirit, advocating a combination of allocriticism and autocriticism,¹⁰ as do Heitsch,¹¹ Leshner,¹² Philippoussis,¹³ and Marcinkowska,¹⁴ among others. Though Kirk and Raven do in fact indicate the essential issue of the cognitive limitations of man discussed by Xenophanes, as well as the fact that he indicated the contrast between gods and men (especially in fragment B 38, or in Kirk&Raven fr. 192), they vaguely suggest that Xenophanes, "like Heraclitus, felt himself to be in special state of knowledge for this reason."¹⁵

On the other hand, some scholars are convinced that Xenophanes' criticism refers only to the thought of others, and that he believed himself to be epistemically privileged, meaning that he thought only he possessed knowledge. In light of this assumption, Xenophanes would be only allocritical, not autocritical. For B. Snell "it is evident that Xenophanes himself trusts to soar above the usual false assumptions of men."¹⁶ However, this scholar draws attention to the fact that it is not certain how man could participate in divine knowledge, which could indicate either that the thinker from Colophon simply did not write about this, or that his writings on this subject have not survived. O. Gigon¹⁷ comments in a similar tone,

¹⁰ He writes: "His observations of the widely differing beliefs of mankind had led Xenophanes to the conclusion that none of them could be right. In their place he puts forward what he personally feels is the truth, yet in all modesty and honesty he must confess that as all men are fallible, so may he be." Guthrie 1962: 396. Commenting on the interpretation assuming the existence of two different objects of cognition in Xenophanes, he adds: "[...] we cannot affirm that Xenophanes posited two realms of existence, of one of which men could have certain knowledge, and of the other only opinion. He said that men could have no certain knowledge at all: that was reserved for God." Guthrie 1962: 398.

¹¹ Heitsch 1966: 193-235.

¹² Leshner 1978: 1-21.

¹³ "It is of fundamental importance also to notice here that Xenophanes includes himself in (rather then, as it is argued, excludes from) the οὐτις ἀνὴρ and, consequently, his *dokos*." Philippoussis 1989: 330.

¹⁴ This author notes that "absolutely nothing in the fragments of Xenophanes indicates that he considers himself inspired or in any way cognitively privileged. Thus, it remains for us to acknowledge that the pessimistic statement contained in fr. 34 concerns the views of other philosophers and Xenophanes' own to an equal degree." Marcinkowska 2004: 12, trans. L. Fretschel.

¹⁵ Kirk, Raven 1964: 180.

¹⁶ Snell 1960: 143.

¹⁷ Gigon 1968: 178.

which may indicate - in his opinion - the existence of a parallel between the views of Xenophanes and Heraclitus regarding the opposition of the wise man to the masses. J. Gajda-Krynica openly indicates such a similarity.¹⁸ F. M. Cleve, on the other hand, excludes the possibility of autocriticism in Xenophanes' views, owing to the fact that he treats this thinker as a prophet. This scholar asserts that "his doctrine is indeed not substantiated by any philosophical arguments. It is preached with the authoritativeness of a prophet."¹⁹ As "the devout herald of the *Heis Megistos*," Xenophanes cannot be viewed as the father of skepticism not only in the modern understanding, but also in the ancient understanding.²⁰ A detailed critique of the position asserting epistemological autocriticism on the part of Xenophanes can be found in the work of S. Yonezawa. This scholar accurately recognizes that essential problem, which I presented in the form of the dichotomy between the combination of allocriticism and autocriticism on the one hand, and only allocriticism on the other. Yonezawa, whose arguments will, to a large degree, constitute the basis for my polemic, is against the interpretation asserting Xenophanes' autocriticism. He states that "it is unthinkable that Xenophanes was a sceptic and that he included himself in 'man' of fr. 34 who he denied having 'certain truth.'"²¹

It is worth examining the extant fragments of Xenophanes from the perspective of the two mentioned forms of criticism. The comments of Sextus, Varro, and Arius Didymus to fragmentu B 34 cited above unambiguously suggest that Xenophanes stood on the position of full criticism, counting himself among those bound to opinion, as he speaks there about people as such, contrasted with the gods as the latter possess knowledge. Thus, in this

¹⁸ J. Gajda-Krynica writes: "Only he knows the truth! What distinguishes Xenophanes from ignorant masses, or rather 'opining' masses, is his wisdom – *sofie*. For the first time in the history of philosophical thought we come in contact with the significant opposition of the 'wise man' and the masses; we find the same opposition in Heraclitus." Gajda-Krynica 2007: 119-120, trans. L. Fretscher.

¹⁹ Cleve 1965: 27.

²⁰ Cleve 1965: 28. It is worth noting here that according to Cleve – in contrast to other advocates of the anti-autocritical interpretation - there is a difference between Xenophanes and Heraclitus, which this scholar views in the psychological dimension. He writes: "Accordingly, the mood and hue of his 'religion' is rather contemplative, rather theogon than pathogon. This lack in emotional appeal, this failure to bestow meaning on the sufferings from destiny, makes for one of the main differences between Xenophanes and that other religious reformer, the Ephesian Heraclitus." Cleve 1965: 30.

²¹ Yonezawa 1989: 438.

passage we can oppose: μέν from verse 1 - δ' from verse 4, and σαφές from verse 1 - δόκος from verse 4.²²

There can be no doubt that Xenophanes is an allocritical thinker. He critiques Homer and Hesiod (B 10, B 11, B 12)²³ for their notions of the gods, and thus all those, who unreflectively cite these testimonies. Aside from these two examples, further objects of critique seem to be Simonides (B 21), Epimenides (B 20), Pythagoras (B 7), Lasos of Hermione (A 16), and the inhabitants of Colophon.²⁴ In the objective layer, the following become objects of direct or indirect critique: arrogance (B 1), customs at feasts (B 1, B 5), the contents of speeches lacking in *arete* and benefits (B 1), a lack of piety (B 1), people's excessive respect and profits for Olympic champions (B 2), the erroneous discernment of the hierarchy of values (B 2), a lack of teleological reflection on the good of the *polis* (B 2), useless pleasures (B 3), the concept of metempsychosis (B 7), anthropomorphism (B 11, B 12, B 14, B 16), potential zoomorphism (B 15), superstition of bacchanals (B17), meteorological superstitions (B 32), the

²² Yonezawa also mentions the antithesis: nobody (οὐτις ἀνὴρ) – everybody (πάντες). Yonezawa 1989: 433. In footnote 15, he states that he takes "πᾶσι as masculine with Burnet." Yonezawa translates the last sentence of fr. B 34: "all men have their opinion (δόκος) about them." Yonezawa 1989: 434. It seems, however, that Xenophanes would rather say that δόκος is allotted to all (Leshner's proposal), not that all men have their opinion about them. In my opinion, Xenophanes above all wants to emphasize the objective universality of opinion (I understand the πᾶσι as a neuter), not simply the subjective universality. Of course, the latter proposal cannot be rejected, but it suggests that everyone has his opinions, i.e. that everyone chooses some solution to these problems. Rather, we should say that this fragment states that those, who speak about all these things are condemned to opinion, as there is no one who possesses the certain and clear truth ἀμφὶ θεῶν τε καὶ ἄσσα λέγω [scil. Xenophanes] περὶ πάντων.

²³ It is worth noting here that Xenophanes' critique in reference to Hesiod does not extend to all of his views, only to those connected with notions of the gods described in the image of humans in his *Theogony*. In my opinion, the critique does not encompass Hesiod's moral recommendations formulated in the *Opera et dies*. Moreover, we can even go so far as to show the essential similarities between Hesiod's ideas in that work and those of Xenophanes. Hesiod believes in a rigorous relationship between work and justice, which allows man to obtain the necessary humility before the gods (law) and nature, as well as rid themselves of arrogance and greed. Xenophanes, on the other hand, seems to negate the arrogance of reason laying claim to certain knowledge. It is only thanks to humility, expressed in the critical (zetetic) approach, that it is possible to find what is better, and free oneself from unreflectively accepted tradition. Thus, both believe in self-perfection and in the "better": Hesiod – through work and toil, Xenophanes – through a philosophical search and investigation. See: Kubok 2014.

²⁴ See: Marcovich 1978: 1.

demand for a oath made on a pious person by an impious one (A 14)²⁵. Of course, this list does not take into account fr. B 34, which seems to be the most general and disputable. In the subjective layer, the controversy is connected with the person of Xenophanes himself, whereas in the objective layer it concerns the possibility of knowledge. It is worth noting a fragment omitted by opponents of the autocritical reading, though it is often used in biographical descriptions. In fragment B 8, Xenophanes states that for 67 years he has wandered on Hellenic soil, to which 25 more years must be added from the moment of his birth. A summary of these biographical comments is the statement: " εἴπερ ἐγὼ περὶ τῶν δ' οἶδα λέγειν ἐτύμως" ("if I know how to speak truly concerning these things").²⁶ It is clear that this passage should not be read literally as an expression of philosophical negative dogmatism,²⁷ though it is worth noting Xenophanes' well-founded restraint even in regards to such facts as his age.

Sextus Empiricus, in commenting on fragment B 34 of Xenophanes, gives two divergent interpretations. According to the first, Xenophanes was to profess that nothing is cognizable (πάντα ἀκατάληπτα),²⁸ thus rejecting all possible criteria of truth.²⁹ According to the second, the thinker from Colophon did not proclaim universal acatalepsy, but rather permits δόκος as a criterion.³⁰ This passage can also be looked at from the perspective of its argumentational structure. Verses 1-2 contain a general thesis, while verses 3-4 are its justification. The generality of this thesis seems to suggest that it is binding for everyone

²⁵ See Yonezawa's own list: 1989: 434-435.

²⁶ Lesher's translation.

²⁷ Lesher accurately comments on this fragment, though he uses the term skepticism instead of negative dogmatism, which may suggest that for Xenophanes, the question of his age was the object of constant investigation, which there is no mention of in the texts. He writes: "Xenophanes' expression of some uncertainty in this connection provides some reason to think that (at least in this late period of his life) his 'scepticism' was the usual 'retail' sort rather than the 'wholesale' or 'philosophical scepticism' often found in fragment 34 [...]" . Lesher 1992: 71.

²⁸ "Ξενοφάνης μὲν κατὰ τινὰς εἰπὼν πάντα ἀκατάληπτα". Sext. Emp., *Adv. Math.*, VII, 49.

²⁹ „Οὗτος μὲν δὴ οὐ φησιν εἶναι κριτήριον ἀληθείας διὰ τὸ μηδὲν εἶναι καταληπτὸν ἐν τῇ φύσει τῶν ζητουμένων" Sext. Emp., *Adv. Math.*, VII, 52.

³⁰ „φαίνεται μὴ πᾶσαν κατάληψιν ἀναιρεῖν ἀλλὰ τὴν ἐπιστημονικὴν καὶ ἀδιάπτωτον, ἀπολείπειν δὲ τὴν δοξαστὴν· τοῦτο γὰρ ἐμφαίνει τὸ 'δόκος δ' ἐπὶ πᾶσι τέτυκται'." Sext. Emp., *Adv. Math.*, VII, 110.

regardless of time, i.e. it refers both to the past and future. Of course, due to the general nature of this thesis, the interpretation according to which it also encompasses Xenophanes is more justified. Verses 1-2 of fragment B 34 do not make any mention of excluding Xenophanes from this general statement. It also seems that the justification of this thesis (verses 3-4) does not allow for the recognition of the thinker from Colophon as epistemically singled-out. Xenophanes excludes the possibility of knowledge based on the element of contingency in speaking the some truth with the simultaneous awareness that that truth is possessed.³¹ Even if someone did accidentally speak of what has been brought to pass, he would not be aware of it.³² Thus, fragment B 34 states that either clear knowledge concerning the gods and everything else that Xenophanes talks about is not possible, or, if someone was able to possess it, he could not state (know) that he had possessed it. Opponents of the autocritical reading of Xenophanes' views would be forced to defend the thesis that the knowledge that one had possessed knowledge is possible. More precisely, if Xenophanes did indeed assert that he alone knows, contrary to all other mortals, he would also have to assume that he knows that he possesses this certain knowledge. Of course, this metaobjective knowledge on the certainty of objective knowledge does not fit within the scope of the latter; indeed, such an argument could even suggest some kind of infinite regress. On the other hand, however, this same argument can be formulated in regards to the thesis that someone knows that he does not possess certain knowledge. Therefore, Xenophanes concludes this argument with the assertion that *dokos* is appointed to all (B 34, 4).

³¹ Sextus Empiricus comments on this fragment referring to two metaphors. According to the first, someone who searches for truth is compared to someone searching for gold in a dark room. Even if he finds gold (and is convinced of it), he does not possess knowledge (certainty) that it is, in fact, gold (Sext. Emp., *Adv. Math.*, VII, 52). According to the second metaphor, man's cognitive situation is likened to people shooting arrows at a target in the dark. It is possible that someone hits the target, but no knowledge about this can be attained (Sext. Emp., *Adv. Math.*, VIII, 325). Both metaphors are linked by a vision of darkness enveloping man. Sextus seems to suggest that man's reality is a world of darkness. It is doubtless that Sextus' interpretation is weighed down by the later philosophical tradition, eg. the Pythagoreans, Parmenides, Plato, and others. Nonetheless, however, we can use Sextus' metaphors to illustrate the positions presented in this article. The opponents of an autocritical reading of Xenophanes' views suggest that mortals inhabit a world of darkness, while Xenophanes himself has access to the reality of light. In my opinion, the difference between the mortals and Xenophanes boils down to the fact that he is aware of being in the dark, while the mortals are not.

³² The phrase τετελεσμένον εἰπὼν suggests stating of what has been brought to completion (fulfillment), while τετελεσμένος signifies what has achieved τέλος (fulfillment, result, state of perfection, meta, goal).

Dokos signifies an opinion, supposition, or conjecture that refers to all objects, or more precisely, to those things mentioned in verse 2 of fragment B 34. Either Xenophanes considered himself epistemically distinguished and encompassed by οὐτις ἀνήρ, or δόκοι are universal for everyone, including him. If we accept the second reading, that does not mean that Xenophanes and other mortals should necessarily be considered equal from the perspective of epistemological awareness. Rejecting the conviction that only Xenophanes possesses certain knowledge, the difference between him and other mortals appears in the fact that the thinker from Colophon is - contrary to them - aware that he is condemned to opinion, whereas they do not possess this awareness. Moreover, they are convinced that their opinions (from the perspective of Xenophanes' view) constitute final knowledge, giving rise to no objections and not open to revision. Xenophanes is convinced (only convinced),³³ that he is different from other mortals, not because he lays claim to possessing certain knowledge, but rather because in contrast to them he is aware that his convictions are only opinions, not certain knowledge.

This position will be discussed in more detail later. Here, it would be worthwhile to critically reflect on the arguments of those, who consider Xenophanes to be epistemically distinguished, i.e. who treat him as only allocritical, not auto- and allocritical, in regards to matters of cognition. The first and simplest argument of this type asserts that Xenophanes did not include himself or his views among the objects he critiqued (see the list above). According to Yonezawa, "criticisms like these are quite suitable only to man who can have

³³ The problem analyzed in this article concerns whether or not to exclude Xenophanes from the binding range of the principle according to which there is no one, and will never be anyone who will have clear knowledge about the gods or about the others things of which Xenophanes speaks. The problem, then, concerns the level of objective (epistemic) knowledge, or more precisely, the possibility of cognition. Reflection could also be undertaken on this problem from the level of meta-objective knowledge, concerning the possibility of cognizing our cognition of things. In that case, from the perspective of Xenophanes' distinction between knowledge, or certain and clear truth (τὸ σαφές), and opinion (δόκος), we can distinguish four different positions: 1) Xenophanes knows that he knows, 2) Xenophanes knows that he opines, 3) Xenophanes opines that he knows, 4) Xenophanes opines that he opines. For now we can say that in light of fr. B 34, 3-4, position 1) was explicitly rejected by Xenophanes. Were we to also accept the thesis about the universality of opinion, positions 2) and 3) would need to be questioned. However, the issue is more complicated, as verses 1-2 of fr. B 34 are clear testimonies to negative dogmatism, as they suggest the definitive thesis (not only supposition) that there is no one, nor will there be anyone, who would have knowledge about the gods or about any of the things, of which Xenophanes speaks.

unshakable confidence in his own views and assertions.”³⁴ This statement seems to go decidedly too far. The fact that someone criticizes something does not mean that he has unshakable confidence in his own views. Allocriticism does not assume an automatic exclusion of autocriticism. Moreover, Xenophanes' criticism does not refer only to a critique of particular standpoints or attitudes, but is meant to recognize and subject to critical reflection the foundations upon which people build their views. Xenophanes is one of the initiators of epistemological reflection, which includes reflection on the source, essence, and limitations of cognition. It seems that he is interested not only in the critique of erroneous notions, but also in showing the universality of opinion. Thus, he does not critique particular views in order to replace them with others, i.e. to introduce true views in the place of false ones, but rather to reveal the doxal character of human cognition, which is open to revision. In my opinion, the opposition setting the false opinions of others against the dogmatically certain knowledge of Xenophanes is inadequate.

Certain scholars, attempting to reject the autocriticism of Xenophanes, i.e. to exclude him from the group of those condemned to opinion, frequently cite fragment B 14 to support their thesis:

ἀλλ' οἱ βροτοὶ δοκέουσι γεννᾶσθαι θεούς,
τὴν σφετέρην δ' ἐσθῆτα ἔχειν φωνήν τε δέμας τε

For example, S. Yonezawa in a comment on this fragment writes that Xenophanes "criticizes the false beliefs of 'the mortals (οἱ βροτοί)' [...]. In its literal sense, the term 'the mortals' must include humankind as a genus, including Xenophanes himself. But he does not share those beliefs of the mortals and criticizes them as false. So he must surely be exempt from those false beliefs. Therefore, when he calls men 'the mortals' and criticizes their false beliefs, it is most clear that he does not include himself as one of 'the mortals.'"³⁵ I do not think the issue is as clear as Yonezawa would have it, moreover, the interpretation could be accepted according to which Xenophanes is aware that everyone, including him, is

³⁴ Yonezawa 1989: 435.

³⁵ Yonezawa 1989: 435.

condemned to opinion, i.e. is encompassed by the term "the mortals." Xenophanes does not critique the false beliefs of mortals, as the category of falsehood does not appear in this passage.³⁶ The arbitrary introduction of the concept of falsehood prejudices the possession of truth on the part of Xenophanes; anyone who describes certain convictions as false must himself be convinced as what the truth really is. Such a conclusion does not follow from the cited passage. Xenophanes only writes that mortals δοκέουσι, that gods are born, wear their own clothes and have a voice and figure (body). The verb δοκέω used in this passage should be compared with its derivatives in B 35 ("ταῦτα δεδοξάσθω μὲν εἰκότα τοῖς ἐτύμοισι...") and B 34, 4 ("[...] δόκος δ' ἐπὶ πᾶσι τέτυκται"). There is no mention of falsity in any of these passages,³⁷ and δοκέω should rather be translated as "suppose," "assume," or "conjecture." In fragment B 14, Xenophanes does not assert that mortals harbor false convictions, he only states that they accept such views, that they supposed such an image of the gods. He does not make these statements from the position of a privileged possessor of the truth about the gods, but rather as a critical observer stating a fact. This fully corresponds with fragment B 34, in which he states that "the clear truth no man has seen nor will there be anyone who knows about the gods." In addition, the verb δοκέω presupposes some element of choice or assumption, which is characteristic for mortals. Xenophanes' assertions contained in B 14 should not be viewed on the same level of objective reflection as those of the remaining mortals. The aim is not to replace the false opinions of mortals with the true views of the thinker from Colophon. His assertion belongs to the metalevel, as it concerns the opinions of mortals as such. He does not state, however, that they are true or false in their entirety; he only states that mortals harbor such opinions, that they are condemned to

³⁶ It is worth noting that in the extant fragments of Parmenides' poem, the category of falsehood also does not appear, and - what follows - neither does the opposition truth – falsehood. The fundamental distinction for the thinker from Elea is that of two paths of investigation: the way of truth (literally: the way of persuasion, which accompanies truth) and the way of opinion of mortals. The truth – opinion distinction can also be illustrated as the contrast between true certainty and untrue certainty (D-K 28 B 1, 30; B 8, 28).

³⁷ In his commentary to fragment B 34, J. H. Lesher writes: "In light of the inferior status of mortal δόξα in Parmenides' account (and subsequently in Plato's) one might imagine that δόκος here in Xenophanes must have contained an implicit element of error or falsity. But this does not appear to be the case. [...] δόκος, therefore, like δοκέω, involves what one 'takes' to be the case, what one 'opines' [...], without an inherent suggestion that what one opines is false." Lesher 1992: 159.

opinions, suppositions, and conjectures. A confirmation of this reading can be found in the statement: "δόκος δ' ἐπὶ πᾶσι τέτυκται" (B 34, 4).

The difference between Xenophanes and the mortals does not lie in the fact that the mortals are stuck in falsity, while Xenophanes alone possesses knowledge, but boils down to the fact that Xenophanes is aware that everyone is condemned to opinion, including he himself,³⁸ while the mortals are unable to realize that their opinions are simply opinions; thus, consciously or not, they believe their opinions should be treated as the final truth. Mortals, in their opinions, are certain of their own convictions and do not admit the possibility of error; they have achieved certainty, but it is only their subjective certainty, which lays claim to finality.

The next issue that should be taken into account is the problem of clarifying οἱ βροτοί in fragment B 14. The question arises whether Xenophanes perceives himself as one of the mortals. Yonezawa firmly accepts that Xenophanes excludes himself from this set, as he does not share these false views.³⁹ The category of falsity was discussed earlier. Here, it is worth noting that a critique of the opinions of mortals does not have to automatically be connected with setting oneself beyond those mortals.⁴⁰ It is also worth noting that Xenophanes uses in these passages both the word βροτοί and ἄνθρωποι. The first appears in the context of accepting or assuming certain views about the gods, and so ties in with the acceptance of a certain doxal standpoint (B 14). The use of the word ἄνθρωποι on the other hand, is more neutral, as it is not connected with any particular assumption as to the nature of the gods or the world. In fragment B 11 Xenophanes writes that Homer and Hesiod ascribed certain

³⁸ Of course, in reference to this assertion the accusation can be made that Xenophanes was not aware of the fact that if he opines that everyone opines, this does not necessarily have to be the case; it could be the case that someone (or even everyone except him) possesses truth. Of course, we are unable to resolve this matter on the basis of the extant fragments. It seems, however, that Xenophanes' statements are aimed at the "promotion" of cognitive humility, so to speak, or at least holding back from the arrogance of dogmatic, conclusive claims to certain cognition of the gods and the world.

³⁹ "Therefore, when he calls men 'the mortals' and criticizes their false beliefs, it is most clear that he does not include himself as one of 'the mortals.'" Yonezawa 1989: 435.

⁴⁰ J. Philippoussis asserts that "Xenophanes is one of the *brotoi* and *anthrôpoi* who, in frgs B 11 and 14, *dokeousi* and *kaleousi*; he is one of the *thnêtoi* to whom, in frg 18, the *panta* have not been revealed; he is one of the *pantes* who, as the first plural *ekgenomestha* indicates in frg 33, came from 'earth and water.'" Philippoussis 1989: 335, n. 15.

traits to the gods, which are shameful and embarrassing for people. In this passage, it is Homer and Hesiod who hold a certain position, while people almost by nature consider theft, adultery, and deceit shameful. In fragment B 23, on the other hand, Xenophanes mentions a god who is the greatest among gods and men. Here again people are not described from the perspective of their cognitive reference to the world. Moreover, Xenophanes adds in the same passage that god is not similar to mortals (θνητοῖσιν), neither in terms of thought (νόημα) or body (δέμας). It is difficult to unambiguously judge whether the distinction between βροτοί and ἄνθρωποι in Xenophanes has a deeper philosophical significance, though if we were to seek one, ἄνθρωποι rather signifies mankind as a whole, while βροτοί those, who accept certain conjectures describing reality.⁴¹ It seems to me, however, that a more interesting distinction can be found in Xenophanes. In reference to Homer and archaic literature, we can state that βροτοί signifies those, who are mortal in contrast to the immortal gods. This finite nature of human existence is inseparably tied with the finite nature (limitations on) cognition, which Xenophanes emphasizes in his statements that δόκος is universal (B 34, 4) and that there never was, nor ever will be anyone who will possess the clear truth about the gods and everything else, about which Xenophanes speaks

⁴¹ This problem also appears in interpreting the philosophy of Parmenides. He also distinguishes between βροτοί and ἄνθρωποι. Coxon states that "the term βροτοί does not refer to the man-in-the-street, but to philosophers" (Coxon 1934: 134), whereas ἄνθρωποι refers to mankind as a whole. This view is shared by Owen 1960: 91, n. 2 and Meijer 1997: 225-227. Verdenius is of a different opinion, calling this distinction quite arbitrary (Verdenius 1942: 56, n. 3). The word βροτοί does indeed appear in Parmenides in the context of concrete views on the nature of things that are subjected to critique. Fragments B 1, 30, B 6, 4, B 8, 38-39, B 8, 51-52, B 8, 60-61 speak about the fact that mortals do not have certainty, they do not know anything, they wander around two-headed, having only convictions, and their statements are deceitful. On the other hand, in the context of the word ἄνθρωποι polemic descriptions almost do not appear. In fragments B 1, 27, B 16 (twice), B 19 there is talk of what belongs to people for the sole reason that they are people. Fragment B 19 is the most disputable, as it contains that statement that people (ἄνθρωποι) gave things their names. In B 8, 38-39, on the other hand, Parmenides writes that everything will be a name, that mortals (βροτοί) accepted in the conviction that it was true. Thus, it is difficult to uphold that there exists some rigorous distinction between these categories; rather, it seems reasonable to agree with the view of A. Finkelberg that we are dealing with a certain tendency. "If the alternation of βροτοί and ἄνθρωποι is not due to material convenience, a possibility which should not be neglected, and consequently the difference is not purely incidental, we may speak of a tendency in Parmenides to use ἄνθρωποι in a more general sense (1.27, 16.2), but only of a tendency, for in 19.3 ἄνθρωποι appear in exactly the same association with the pluralistic outlook as βροτοί usually do. This undermines the basis of Coxon's suggestion, improbable in itself, that by βροτοί and ἄνθρωποι Parmenides systematically distinguishes between philosophers and ordinary men." Finkelberg 1988: 11, n. 34. We should be all the more cautious in drawing long-term conclusions in the case of Xenophanes, because even this tendency is rather weakly present in his views.

(B 34, 1-2). In this sense, it is clear that Xenophanes cannot possibly think of himself as someone, who is not a mortal. Such arrogance expressed as an attempt at making himself equal to the gods or setting himself beyond the mortals does not at all fit with his piety expressed in the elegies. Among the mortals, however, as was mentioned, there are those, who are aware that their views are only convictions, and those, who do not admit such a possibility, if only in the fact that they treat their convictions as final, with the claim to complete truth. To better clarify this distinction, we must refer to fragment B 18. In it, Xenophanes states that “not from the beginning did gods intimate all things to mortals, but in time those, who search (ζητοῦντες) find what is better” (D-K B 18). Thus, we can say that in general, βροτοί are divided into ζητοῦντες and those, who do not search. Only the former can find what is better, the rest will continue to remain within the bounds of their own convictions, or those simply sanctified by tradition.

On the basis of fr. B 18, we can say that Xenophanes refers in his studies to the zetetic-syncritic method, which boils down to a constant search for better solutions (the fig and honey example, B 38), while simultaneously rejecting the belief that the final truth has been found. The purpose of the syncritic aspect of this procedure is to critically compare (juxtapose) convictions in order to grasp what is better (ἄμεινον), not the dogmatic assertion that what is best has been found (ἄριστον).⁴² An expression of this zetetic-syncritic attitude can be found in Xenophanes' elegies. In fr. B 2 he writes that our wisdom is better than the strength of men and horses (ἡμετέρη σοφίη, B 2, 11-12) and that good (true) wisdom should be valued more highly than physical strength (B 2, 14).⁴³ The phrase “our wisdom” (ἡμετέρη

⁴² J. Philippoussis writes: “The comparison, result of a critique, implies both a critic (a human observer) and a criterion (be it a relative one). But the relative criterion provides only a relative and conjectural conclusion and, as both the criterion and the conclusion are subject to doubt and revision, they can always be re-questioned and revised.” Philippoussis 1989: 333.

⁴³ Some scholars translate the term σοφίη used in his elegies as ‘art’ or ‘skill’ (for example Burnet 1930: 117, n. 2; Bowra 1953: 16-20; Guthrie 1962: 364), others as ‘knowledge,’ ‘wisdom,’ ‘Wissen’ (for example D-K: 129; Marcovich 1978: 22). E. Heitsch, on the other hand, combines both of these meanings (‘unsere Kunst und Kenntnis’ Heitsch 1983: 19), whereas J. H. Lesher translates this word as ‘expertise’ (Lesher 1992: 56). S. Yonezawa, to defend his interpretation excluding Xenophanes' autocriticism, writes: “Therefore, it is most natural to think that Xenophanes' wisdom is in the center of ‘our wisdom’ and representative of it, although ‘our wisdom’ is shared among ‘us.’ Hence, the word ‘our’ points out those people who accepted Xenophanes' wisdom and his sense of values. After all, ‘our wisdom (line 12)’ or ‘a good wisdom (line 14)’ here means nothing more than his thought and insight expressed in his poems.” Yonezawa 1989: 436-437. Translating σοφίη as ‘art’ would lead to

σοφίη) unambiguously suggests that Xenophanes is not only referring to himself. This indicates that the division among mortals (βροτοί) is drawn according to who possesses a critical zetetic attitude. On the one hand, there are mortals who do not seek truth, because they are satisfied with their dogmatic convictions, often drawn from unreflectively-accepted tradition; in the case of these mortals, since they do not search, they cannot find what is epistemically better. On the other hand, there are those, who seek (ζητοῦντες), who persistently look for truth, and only they can find what is better. In addition, it is probably only the latter, and certainly Xenophanes, who are aware of the status of their investigations. They are aware that their views (δόκοι) are only opinions, and thus only temporary, relative (syncritic)⁴⁴ truths open to revision, as they are obtained as a result of applying the critical syncritic method with the simultaneously held (*de facto* dogmatic) assumption that certain knowledge is unattainable for mortals. Thus, when Xenophanes writes about "our wisdom," he means above all the critical wisdom of ζητοῦντες, to which he himself belongs. This criticism of the searching is, therefore, both allocritical and autocritical, as those who search are aware that their hitherto convictions may be rejected, revised, and replaced with new (better) convictions.

Therefore, Xenophanes is not a thinker convinced that only he knows, while all other mortals only hold opinions (allocriticism without autocriticism), but is aware of the fact that all human convictions are only opinions (B 34, 4), including his own (allo- and autocriticism

difficulties in clarifying the phrase 'our art,' as it is difficult to say who would belong to this group besides Xenophanes himself (it would also be possible to translate 'ἡμετέρη σοφίη' as 'my art'). It would be difficult to imagine that Xenophanes had Homer and Hesiod, whom he critiques, in mind. In my opinion, σοφίη in this fragment signifies a certain type of skill, or critical attitude connected with certain critical wisdom that takes into account reflection on man's cognitive limitations, which from a practical perspective would serve the good of the polis. This critical wisdom is both theoretical (it undertakes problems tied with cognition) and practical, as it is directed towards socio-political good. Cognitive humility, resulting in critical reflection concerning man and the hierarchy of values, can be built upon the foundation of epistemological reflection. This good (true) wisdom (B 2, 14) is critical wisdom, including (and maybe above all) autocritical wisdom.

⁴⁴ Xenophanes distinguishes those, who search from those, who do not, while Parmenides creates a division of the paths of investigation, distinguishing the way of persuasion, which accompanies truth, and the way of opinion. In Xenophanes' view, truths discovered (*scil.* disclosed by the gods – B 18) by those who seek are temporary, relative, and open to revision, while truth for Parmenides was final, absolute, and complete. An interesting research topic – extending beyond the framework of this article – would be the comparison of Xenophanes' position with Parmenides' way of opinion.

combined). However, there are those among mortals who dogmatically (uncritically) accept their convictions as final, and those capable of searching for truth; the latter's cognitive effort is expressed in the application of the zetetic-syncretic method directed at finding better answers (because only those, who seek, can find) with the full awareness that what is ἀμεινον should not be treated as that, which is ἀριστον, since man cannot cognize the clear and certain truth and has only opinion at his disposition. Xenophanes' pan-criticism as a combination of allo- and autocriticism shows that Western philosophy already at its source strongly accented the critical, anti-dogmatic, and zetetic attitude, thanks to which it had the opportunity to develop creatively instead of stagnating.

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Summary

The article analyzes extant fragments of Xenophanes of Colophon's works from the perspective of broadly-understood criticism, with special emphasis on fragment B 34 (Diels-Kranz). Two types of criticism can be distinguished: allocriticism and autocriticism. The first refers to criticism of the opinions of others, while the second type of criticism is directed at one's own opinions. The object of criticism discussed in the article is the possibility of possessing knowledge. In this context, it is worth considering whether Xenophanes believed that no human being, including himself, could possess clear and certain knowledge (a combination of allocriticism and autocriticism), or whether he believed himself excluded from this general rule (solely allocriticism).

KEYWORDS: criticism; knowledge; skepticism; dogmatism; Xenophanes of Colophon

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